

Utah Veterans' Advisory Council
Minutes of Monthly Meeting
February 20, 2012

Place: Beehive Room, East Senate Bldg., on the Utah State Capitol grounds.

Time: 4:00 PM

Members Present: Bill Christoffersen, Bill Dunlap, Brian Garrett, Frank Maughan, Dave Phillips, Jon Skelly, Terry Schow

Excused: Les Baxley, Gary Schwartz, James Theriault

Secretary: Alan Ferner

Guests: Gary Harter, Dennis McFall, Jan Scruggs, Tim Tetz, Dennis Tracey, Steve Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM by Frank Maughan. Frank introduced and welcomed those in attendance.
2. The minutes of our 16 January meeting were reviewed and approved by the members of the Council.
3. Jan Scruggs, Executive Director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, gave a presentation on the proposed construction of an Education Center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. He is asking for our support of HR 588, which facilitates fund raising and donor recognition. Dave Phillips made a motion that the Council submit a letter to each member of Utah's congressional delegation, urging co-sponsorship and full support of the House bill and Senate equivalent. Bill Dunlap seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Frank Maughan agreed to prepare the letter.
4. Dennis McFall reported on the Veterans Nursing Homes under construction. The Ivins Home is 80% completed and the Payson Home is 74% completed. Ribbon cutting is scheduled for 23 May at Ivins and 6 June at Payson.
5. Subcommittee on the State Veterans Cemetery – Dennis McFall updated the Council on the grant projects at the state Veterans Cemetery, which are now about 97% complete.
6. Legislative Subcommittee: Brian Garrett reviewed findings of the Veterans Reintegration Task Force that led to proposed legislation. There was a discussion on HB 265, which would require all state and local government jobs to be listed at DWS. Bill Dunlap made a motion that Frank Maughan, Terry Schow and Gary Herter meet with the sponsor of the bill to facilitate its passage. Brian Garrett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

We then discussed the proposed legislation that will directly affect the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs and the Advisory Council. We agreed that Frank Maughan will call a special meeting as soon as the text of the bill is available, for review and discussion with the sponsor.

7. Jon Skelly advised that he does not anticipate any direct result on the VARO from the sequester. Jon shared the following data regarding the VA and Utah Veterans: Every month the VA pays \$30 million in disability payments to over 20,000 Utah Vets. They answer 1300 phone calls and answer 350 emails from Utah Vets every day. They assist 1600 Veterans seeking employment every day. Also, in spite of a huge backlog of claims, over 50 % are already receiving benefits.

8. Steve Young announced that the new parking garage is scheduled to open on 12 April. The solar field has been activated which will supply 20-30% of the electricity to the VAMC. Steve also advised of their work with Homeless Veterans and that Utah has the only Veterans Court at the federal level.
9. Gary Harter commented on his recent visits with members of the Council as well as the Veterans Homes, Veterans Cemetery etc. Gary stated that overall he was very impressed by these experiences, and looks forward to contributing to the future of Veterans Affairs in Utah
10. The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 PM by Frank Maughan. Our next monthly meeting will be held Wednesday, March 20th, at 4:00 PM in the 4th floor Director's Conference Room, at the VA Regional Office, 570 Foothill Blvd.